

National Quality Framework Overview

By Faye Williamson

On 1 January 2012, the National Quality Framework was implemented and applies to long day care, family day care, preschool (or kindergarten) and outside school hours care (OSHC) services. The framework was introduced to regulate and improve services.

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework aims to boost quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in education and care services through:

- A national legislative framework
- A National Quality Standard
- A national quality rating and assessment process
- A new national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

National legislative framework

The national legislative framework consists of:

- The Education and Care Services National Law
- The Education and Care Services National Regulations.

It creates a jointly governed uniform national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services. It replaces existing separate licensing and quality assurance processes.

The National Law and Regulations include:

- Processes for obtaining provider approvals, service approvals and supervisor certificates
- Minimum operating requirements for education and care services, relating to matters such as staffing, physical environment and educational programs
- A new National Quality Standard, against which services will be assessed and rated.

A Regulatory Authority in each state and territory will be primarily responsible for managing the National Quality Framework. The Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of SA will be the first point of contact for services in SA.

A new national body—the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority— will ensure national consistency and effective implementation of the new system.

National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard is divided into seven quality areas:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Leadership and service management.

The National Quality Standard is linked to national learning frameworks that recognise children learn from birth and outline practices to support and promote children's learning. These are:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia.

National quality rating and assessment process

Approved Services will be assessed against each of the seven Quality Areas. It will provide families with more information for



“The National Quality Framework aims to boost quality and drive continuous improvement...”

making choices about their children's education and care. Assessments for existing services will commence from mid-2012.

Significant improvement required	The service is not meeting the National Quality Standard and the regulator is working closely with the service to immediately improve its quality.
Working towards National Quality Standard	The service is working towards meeting the National Quality Standard.
Meets National Quality Standard	The service meets the National Quality Standard.
Exceeds National Quality Standard	The service is exceeding the National Quality Standard.
Excellent	The service demonstrates excellence and is recognised as a sector leader.

Qualifications

Research confirms that higher qualified educators improve outcomes for children. The following qualification requirements for educators who are educating and caring for children will apply.

By 1 January 2014:

- Services providing care to less than 25 children must have access to an early childhood teacher for at least 20 percent of the operating hours.
- Services providing care to 25+ children on any given day, must ensure that an early childhood teacher is in attendance for:
 - six hours on that day or
 - 60 percent of the operating hours.

A service may choose to comply with these requirements by engaging a full-time equivalent early childhood teacher.

- Within care services, half of all educators will need to have (or be actively working towards) an approved diploma-level early childhood education and care qualification or above, and the remaining educators will be required to have (or be actively working towards) an approved Certificate III level early childhood education and care qualification, or equivalent.
- All family day care coordinators will need to have an approved diploma-level early childhood education and care qualification or above.
- All family day care educators will be required to have (or be actively working towards) an approved Certificate III level early childhood education and care qualification, or equivalent.



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By 1 January 2020:

- Services providing care to 60+ children on any given day, must ensure that a second early childhood teacher is in attendance for:
 - three hours on that day or
 - 30 percent of the operating hours.
- Services providing care to 80+ children on any given day, must ensure that a second early childhood teacher is in attendance for:
 - six hours on that day or
 - 60 percent of the operating hours.

Educator-to-child ratios

Centre-based services

Age of Children	Educator to Child
Birth to 24 Months	1:4
Over 24 months and less than 36 months	1:5
Over 36 months & up to & including preschool age	1:11

Family day care services

Age of Children	Educator to Child
Birth to 13 years	1:7, with no more than four children preschool age or under

Excursion ratios

Specific excursion ratios no longer exist. Educator-to-child ratios for excursions must be based upon the service undertaking a risk assessment from which they formulate the appropriate ratio.

For more information visit <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/home> ■